



Common Canine Care Practices with Serious Consequences

As compassionate pet owners, our primary responsibility is to provide our furry companions with the highest standards of care and well-being. However, even with the best intentions, certain widely accepted practices can inadvertently jeopardize the health and safety of our beloved dogs.

Numerous animal welfare organizations, including the American Veterinary Medical Association (**AVMA**) and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (**ASPCA**), have raised awareness about the potential dangers associated with some common canine care practices.

Additionally, **many states and local jurisdictions** have enacted laws and regulations to protect pets from neglect, cruelty, and improper care.

Mouthwash (*Listerine*) as a water additive

Addressing a dog's breath concerns is a common challenge for many owners. While using mouthwash as a water additive may seem like a simple solution, many mouthwash formulations contain ingredients like alcohol, xylitol, and essential oils, which can be toxic to dogs if ingested.

We understand the concern about your dog's breath, but mouthwash can be harmful if consumed. Instead, consider regular dental care routines, such as brushing with dog-safe toothpaste or providing appropriate chew toys to help maintain good oral hygiene.

Introducing Vaping Devices

While vaping may be perceived as a harmless habit to share with a dog, the inhalation of vaporized liquids and chemicals can be highly toxic to their sensitive respiratory systems. Dogs have a heightened sense of smell and are **more susceptible to the potential risks** associated with vaping.

Sharing habits with pets can feel bonding, but **nicotine is extremely toxic** to dogs. Vaping poses serious health risks to them. Instead, consider exploring safe and enriching activities that promote their physical and mental well-being without exposing them to potentially harmful substances.

Mixing Sleep Medications with Alcohol

For some owners, mixing sleep aids (*Ambien / Zolpidem*) or sedatives with alcohol (*including beer / wine*) for their dogs may seem like a **convenient solution** to manage sleep or anxiety issues. However, combining these substances can have severe consequences for a dog's health.

They can interact in unpredictable ways, potentially causing respiratory depression, liver damage, and even **coma or death**. Mixing medications with alcohol is never advisable.

While we recognize the challenges of managing your dog's sleep or anxiety issues, mixing medications with alcohol puts their well-being at risk. Please consult your veterinarian for safe and effective treatment options tailored to your dog's specific needs.

Combining Dog Treats with Petroleum Jelly

While some owners may add petroleum jelly (*Vaseline*) or other non-edible substances to their dog's treats with the intention of addressing digestive concerns, this practice can lead to gastrointestinal issues, including constipation or **obstruction**.

These products are **not meant for consumption** and can cause significant harm if ingested.

We understand your concern for your dog's digestive health, but adding petroleum jelly to their treats is not a safe solution. Instead, consider increasing their fiber intake through appropriate dietary adjustments or consulting your veterinarian for targeted treatment recommendations.

Rust as a Dietary Supplement

It's understandable that some owners may consider **rust as a source of iron** supplementation for their dogs. However, while this approach may seem reasonable, rust can contain harmful contaminants, such as lead and other heavy metals, which can accumulate in a dog's body and lead to serious health issues, including organ damage and neurological problems.

We understand your desire to ensure your dog receives adequate nutrition, but ingesting rust can be detrimental to their health. Consider consulting with a veterinarian to explore safe and appropriate dietary supplements or adjustments to their regular food.

Caffeinated smoothies of Baked Goods

Sharing caffeinated smoothies of baked goods (biscuits) with our dogs may seem like a harmless way to include them in our morning routines. However, caffeine is a stimulant that can have **severe** consequences for dogs, including restlessness, rapid breathing, heart palpitations, **seizures**, and even life-threatening complications.

We appreciate your desire to share your morning routine with your beloved companion, but caffeinated items pose serious risks to their health. Please consider providing your dog with safe, dog-friendly treats or engaging in other bonding activities that do not involve potentially hazardous substances.

Applying Deodorant to Sensitive Areas

It's natural for owners to want to keep their dogs fresh and comfortable. However, using human deodorant products on a dog's sensitive areas can cause irritation, inflammation, and potential allergic reactions. These products are formulated for human use and may contain ingredients that are **not suitable** for dogs.

We recognize your efforts to keep your dog fresh and comfortable, but applying deodorant to sensitive areas can be detrimental to their well-being. Please consult with your veterinarian for safe and effective grooming practices tailored to your dog's specific needs.

Using Dish Soap for Bathing

For some owners, using readily available household products like dish soaps for bathing their dogs may seem like a convenient option. However, dish soaps are designed for cleaning dishes and cutting through grease, making them unsuitable for use on pets. These harsh formulations can strip away essential oils from a dog's skin, leading to dryness, irritation, and potential **eye injuries** if introduced to their eyes.

We understand the convenience of using readily available household products, but dish soaps are not formulated for use on pets. Please consider investing in gentle, dog-safe shampoos and conditioners specifically designed for their delicate skin and coat.

Using Ear Plugs or Noise-Reducing Devices

Minimizing a dog's exposure to loud noises is a thoughtful consideration. However, **introducing ear plugs** or noise-reducing devices can impair their ability to hear important auditory cues and warnings. This practice may also cause discomfort and potentially lead to ear infections or other ear-related issues.

We understand your concern for your dog's comfort and well-being, but using ear plugs or noise-reducing devices can have unintended consequences. Consider exploring alternative methods, such as desensitization training or creating a safe, quiet space for your dog during loud events.

Unsanitary misuse of inflatable pools

It's known that some owners simplify their lives by using an **inflatable pool as a large sandbox**, forcing their beloved dogs to relieve themselves in a pool where they are semi-immersed by walking in rainwater mixed with diarrhea.

While this approach may seem reasonable for the owner's convenience, it's **not the best** idea because it compromises the dog's comfort and poses serious health risks.

Allowing waste, including diarrhea, to accumulate in a dog's living area can expose them to harmful **bacteria and parasites**. Forcing a dog to walk and relieve themselves in such an unsanitary environment is highly concerning and poses serious risks to their health and well-being.

We recognize the convenience of having an outdoor space for your dog, but maintaining a clean and stimulating environment is essential for their well-being. **Please consider** implementing a regular cleaning routine for their outdoor area and providing ample opportunities for walks, playtime, and enrichment activities. Your dog's quality of life should be a top priority.

Conclusion

As responsible pet owners, we embark on a journey of constant learning and growth, guided by a unwavering commitment to the well-being of our beloved canine companions. While our intentions are pure, we must remain open to the possibility that some of our practices, however well-intentioned, may inadvertently **cause harm**.

It is through a willingness to embrace new knowledge and adapt our approaches that we can truly excel in providing the highest standards of care for our furry friends. The guidelines presented in this comprehensive guide are not only rooted in scientific evidence and veterinary expertise but also aligned with animal welfare laws and regulations applicable across **all states in the United States**.

Let us embrace a mindset of humility and continuous improvement, recognizing that our love for our pets is best expressed through a relentless pursuit of their optimal health, happiness, and quality of life. By fostering a spirit of open-mindedness and a commitment to ongoing education, we can navigate the challenges of responsible pet ownership with grace and efficacy.

Remember, the journey towards becoming the best possible caregiver for our canine companions is one that demands patience, perseverance, and a willingness to learn and evolve. Together, we can create a future where our beloved furry family members thrive, cherished and nurtured in environments that prioritize their well-being above all else.

Reference Merck, M. (2018). Veterinary Forensics Forms. [online] [veterinarynsick.com](http://www.veterinarynsick.com). Available at: <http://www.veterinarynsick.com/forms/> [Accessed 13 Jun. 2018].

Acknowledgements

These guidelines were revised by the Animal Welfare Guidelines Group (AWGG), a sub-committee of WSAVA's Animal Welfare and Wellness Committee (AWWC) and were made possible with the generous support of the committee's sponsor, Waltham®.



These guidelines would not have been possible without the strong support and input from the following members of the AWWC throughout the development process:

• Melinda Merck DVM (USA) • Teresa (Tess) Kommedal DVM, ABVP (Norway) • Karley Harley DVM, DACVIM, DECVIM-CA (USA) • John Rowlings BSc, MSc, PhD (UK) • Sera Abdul Rahmani BVSc, MVSc, PhD (India) • Sheilah Robertson BVMS, PhD, DACVAA, DECVAA, DACAW, DECAWBM, CVA, MRCVS (USA)

The AWGG would also like to thank Francis Meijboom MA, PhD (University of Utrecht) for his ethical insights; Malinda Merck DVM for her input on animal abuse and forensics; Anna Jacksen MA, VetMB, PhD Editor-in-Chief, Austrian Veterinary Journal and the Slovenian Veterinary Association for their invaluable editorial advice and assistance